United Nations A/59/444

General Assembly

Distr.: General
19 October 2004

Original: English

Fifty-ninth session
Agenda item 108
Programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005

Construction of additional office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

The General Assembly, in resolution 56/270 of 27 March 2002, requested the Secretary-General to report on an annual basis on the progress made in the construction of additional office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa.

The report provides the required progress information and an update of the action taken to implement the project since the issuance of the previous report of the Secretary-General (A/58/154).

* The issuance of this report was delayed to allow for consultations with the host country authorities on the final configuration of the land extension.

04-56356 (E) 081104

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 56/270 of 27 March 2002, the General Assembly approved the construction of additional office facilities at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa with a total area of approximately 6,770 square metres, and also approved the utilization of an amount of US$ 7,711,800 for that purpose, to be financed within the available balance of the construction-in-progress account.

2. In accordance with the request of the Assembly in the same resolution, progress reports are to be submitted to it on an annual basis. The present report provides information on the progress made in the implementation of the project since the issuance of the previous report of the Secretary-General (A/58/154).

II. Status of the allocation of additional land by the host country

3. In mid-2003, after prolonged negotiations, the host Government allocated additional land to ECA to enable the further expansion of its compound within the parameters of a major revision to the Addis Ababa master plan. The additional land extension was at the eastern boundary of the ECA compound and comprised two separate plots, totalling 21,066 square metres. The plots were divided east/west and north/south by public roads and parking areas.

4. Following the adoption of the headquarters minimum operating security standards (H-MOSS) at the end of 2003, the additional land allocated to ECA and the initially planned location of the new office building to be erected on it were re-evaluated from a security standpoint. It has been concluded that the new building would require some repositioning on the site. Furthermore, it has become evident that the inability to enclose the ECA complex, which would have been separated by the public roads and parking lots, was an unacceptable security risk for the ECA compound at Addis Ababa. Based on those findings, ECA, in early 2004, formally requested the Addis Ababa Town Planning Authority to re-route the roads around the allocated land extension and to close the public parking lots.

5. The Addis Ababa Town Planning Committee granted formal approval of that request in May 2004. The re-routing of the public roads and the closure of parking lots in the additional land allocated by the Government has resulted in an increase in the size of the land, to approximately 27,260 square metres. The additional land will now remain entirely within the security boundaries of the ECA compound (see annex). An addendum to the host country agreement to include the revised configuration of the land extension is currently being processed by the Government of Ethiopia and the Department of Legal Affairs at United Nations Headquarters.

III. Status of development of the project

6. In his previous progress report (A/58/154), the Secretary General informed the General Assembly that, for the reasons outlined in the report, it would be in the best interests of the Organization to put the design component of the project out for rebidding.

7. The revised request for proposal for professional architectural and engineering services was issued in July 2003, resulting in 10 proposals from bidders, which were assessed during the period from September to November 2003. The Headquarters Committee on Contracts approved the recommended design firm on 18 November 2003.

8. The design work was begun in January 2004 with the preparation of a project brief by the project consultant, based on a letter of intent provided by the Organization pending the resolution of minor contractual issues. The formal contract with the design firm was signed on 6 April 2004. In order to avoid further delays in the implementation of the project, a decision was taken to proceed with the preliminary design phase on the basis of the written approval of the site changes by the Addis Ababa Municipality, pending the signing of the addendum to the host country agreement by the Ethiopian Government and the United Nations. The preliminary design exercise was initiated in May 2004, and the schematic proposals received from the architects at the end of July 2004. The design documentation and the final construction estimates are expected to be available by December 2004. Bearing in mind these expectations, the international tender process for the construction phase is to be initiated in December 2004 and completed by May 2005.

9. Based on the above considerations, the project schedule for the design and construction activities will be as follows:

(a) Design and preparation of the construction tender and construction documents (January to December 2004);

(b) Construction tender and bidding, selection of construction contractor and awarding of the contract (December 2004 to May 2005);

(c) Construction phase (June 2005 to April 2007);

(d) Occupation of the building. The 12-month warranty period is to begin in May 2007.

10. The rebidding of the design contract and negotiations with the host country authorities on the additional land reconfiguration to address security concerns in regard to the location of the new building within the newly granted land have resulted in a delay of some 20 months in the implementation schedule. The application of the H-MOSS guidelines for the new building, which had not been anticipated when the project and its budget were initially formulated in 2001, has led to revisions to the design of the building in order to reflect the new security requirements. These additional security requirements have been kept in mind during the preparation of the revised design brief and the design exercise that followed. The full financial impact of those changes will be better known upon receipt of the final construction estimates in December 2004. Every effort will be made to keep the project costs within the budget approved by the Assembly in resolution 56/270. Should, however, the cost of the design revisions be in excess of the approved project budget, these would be reported to the General Assembly at its resumed fifty-ninth session for appropriate action.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

11. Given the initial delays owing to a need for rebidding of the design contract and for further negotiations with the host Government on the measures required to mitigate security risks at the compound in line with H-MOSS guidelines, the project experienced a delay of some 20 months in the original implementation schedule reported in 2001 (see A/56/672). However, implementation of the project is now under way. The design activities of the project are near completion, the final construction cost estimates are expected to be available by December 2004, the selection of a construction contractor is to be done by May 2005, and the construction is to be completed by the second quarter of 2007.

12. The delay in project implementation, compounded by certain security-related enhancements to the building design, may result in additional project costs. The full financial impact of those changes will be better known upon receipt of the final construction estimates in December 2004. Every effort will be made to keep the total costs of the project within the initial budget approved by the Assembly in resolution 56/270. However, should the cost of the design revisions be in excess of the initial project budget, this will be reported to the General Assembly at its resumed fifty-ninth session for appropriate action.

13. The General Assembly may wish to take note of the present report.

Annex

Site plan

Note: The shaded area on the site plan represents the additional land allocated by the Government of Ethiopia.